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C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 001783

SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE. NSC FOR ABRAMS/RAMCHAND/PASCUAL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/22/2018

TAGS: PBTS PREL PHUM PTER KWBG KPAL IS  
SUBJECT: ARMED PALESTINIAN BOY SHOT DEAD WHILE APPROACHING  
SETTLEMENT

REF: JERUSALEM 1739

Classified By: Acting Principal Officer Greg Marchese for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Early September 20, IDF troops shot and killed a 14-year-old boy as he approached Yitzhar settlement with a Molotov cocktail and a knife. IDF video released to the press shows the boy attempting to light a bomb and the IDF firing on him. Asira al-Qabaliyah's village council told Poloffs the IDF "kidnapped and shot the boy in cold blood." Settlers praised the IDF's action to protect them. END SUMMARY.

14-year-old shot dead

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¶2. (C) One week after clashes between Yitzhar settlers and villagers from neighboring Asira al-Qabaliyah (reftel), the IDF killed 14-year-old Suheib Yasser Ahmed Saleh from Asira al-Qabaliyah as he tried to enter Yitzhar settlement early September 20. The press reported that Saleh had a Molotov cocktail and a knife and showed IDF-released video of him approaching Yitzhar and his death from IDF fire. (Note: The Israeli National Police announced that forensic evidence had established that Saleh was the attacker in the September 13 incident. End note.)

Villagers: "Boy shot in cold blood"

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¶3. (C) Village council member Bassam Abdel-Latif told Poloff that Saleh was "running around in the area" between the village and the settlement on September 20, but that "no Palestinian would even think of trying" to infiltrate into Yitzhar. "The IDF kidnapped him and shot him twice in the legs and once in the chest in cold blood," Abdel-Latif said. Villagers living closest to Yitzhar told Poloffs that the IDF has maintained a constant presence between the village and the settlement since clashes the previous week.

¶4. (C) Abdel-Latif told Poloffs that Israeli security forces are making up for their inability to capture a suspect in the reported torching of a settler caravan and attack on a Yitzhar boy on September 13. The council denies this incident occurred as claimed by the settlers of Yitzhar (reftel). Mayor Hosni Sharif told Poloff September 19 that "they did it themselves; they made it up".

Villagers accustomed to dealing with violence

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¶5. (C) Poloffs visited Asira al-Qabaliyah one day prior to Suheib Saleh's killing, and Sharif complained of Yitzhar's illegal and ever-increasing presence since 1980. Village council member Ibrahim Saleh said that, over the years, settlers have attacked villagers, burnt their fields, stolen

and killed their animals, and poisoned their wells. Poloffs visited two homes attacked September 13 and observed broken windows, bullet-ridden water tanks, and star of David symbols painted on their sides. Saleh said that, to counter settler violence, villagers regularly dispatch men and boys to "defend" the village "with rocks and shouting," after which they call the District Coordination Office to request the assistance of the Israeli Border Police. Council member Saleh said response times vary from thirty to ninety minutes.

He said the IDF always arrives on the scene first but acts "to protect the settlers, not us". (Note: In responding to West Bank security incidents, the IDF does not have a law enforcement function. End Note.)

Settlers: "A great blessing"

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¶6. (C) Samaria Regional Council chairman Gershon Mesika told Poloff that Saleh's killing was "a great blessing," and Yitzhar spokesman Yigal Amitai told Poloff that settlement residents welcomed the IDF action. According to press, Mesika's council issued a statement September 20 praising the IDF but also criticizing it for not taking sufficient action in the past to protect settlers in the area. The statement called Central Command Commander Gadi Shamni "lazy," said the settler reprisals one week earlier were justified, and called for "evacuation compensation" legislation to induce Palestinians from the West Bank.

MARCHESE